DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 088 727 SO 006 942

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TITLE Paper Presented to Symposium on Federal Funding for Sociological Research: Prospects, Policies, Procedures.
PUB DATE 28 Aug 73
NOTE 13p.; Paper presented at the American Sociological Association (New York City, August 28, 1973)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.75 HC-$1.50
DESCRIPTORS *Agency Role; Conference Reports; Educational Development; Educational Needs; *Educational Research; *Research Needs; *Research Opportunities; *Sociology
IDENTIFIERS *National Institute of Education; NIE; NIE Archives

ABSTRACT

The National Institute of Education (NIE), a Federal agency started in August 1972, is concerned primarily with educational research and development. Programs existing prior to NIE, including most of the research programs of the Office of Education and several programs of the Office of Economic Opportunity, were transferred to NIE. In addition, planning papers which focused on specific educational problems or on the contributions which various disciplines might make to the study of education were commissioned before NIE was actually established. Much of the first year of NIE's existence was spent in reviewing and evaluating programs that were transferred into the agency, recruiting a staff, and digesting the planning papers that had been prepared. For example, the planning paper on sociology, prepared by a committee chaired by Burton Clark of Yale, points out the need to study schools as social organizations and to increase knowledge of how educational institutions interact with other sectors of the society. Sociologists have a great deal to contribute in these areas and are solicited to participate in research through any or all of the following NIE programs: 1) Office of Research Grants; 2) Office of Research and Exploratory Studies; 3) Office of Programmatic Research and Development; and 4) Office of Research and Development Resources. (Author/RM)

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PAPER PRESENTED TO SYMPOSIUM ON

FEDERAL FUNDING FOR SOCIOLOGICAL RESEARCH:

PROSPECTS, POLICIES, PROCEDURES

Ward S. Mason

SO 006 942

American Sociological Association
New York City
August 28, 1973

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Ward S. Mason
8/27/73

ASA SYMPOSIUM
August 28, 1973

I. Historical Perspective

A. NIE is a new agency, started in August, 1972, although support for educational research in the Department of Health, Education and Welfare goes back at least to the start of the Cooperative Research Program in the Office of Education in 1958. It has a broad legislative mandate to "seek to improve education... in the United States". Thus it is an agency with a mission, but a mission which has been interpreted broadly to include many different tactics and strategies.

B. The decision to create a new agency was based in part, I suspect, on the desire to make a fresh start in educational research. The Cooperative Research Program had grown from $1 million dollars in 1958 to roughly $100 million in 1972. Although it had achieved some modest success, it was generally perceived as not having had any great impact on American education. Indeed, Coleman, Jencks, and others have raised the question whether schooling makes any difference beyond the impetus provided by the family and socio-economic status. We believe that the creation of NIE is, in a sense, a test of that hypothesis.

C. At any rate, in establishing a new agency, at least three things were done which have a good prognosis for the improvement of the program:

1. The research function was elevated to a much higher place in the bureaucratic structure and thus has greater visability without the need to work through so many layers of the bureaucracy. The Director of NIE, Thomas Glennan, is on a par with the Commissioner of Education, and both he and the Commissioner report to an Assistant Secretary of HEW.

2. Second, a new governance structure was established through the creation of a 15-member National Council on Educational Research, appointed by the President with the advice and consent of the Senate. This is not a group of researchers--James Coleman is possibly the only name you would recognize--but includes members with a wide range of backgrounds in education, industry, and public affairs who are generally responsive to a wide group of constituencies interested in education. The chairman is Patrick Haggerty, Chairman of the Board of Texas Instruments.

3. Third, in several ways the attempt has been made to make NIE an attractive place to work for creative scholars and researchers.

a. For one, NIE is permitted to hire 20% of its staff without regard to Civil Service procedures and restrictions.

b. For another, 10% of its funds may be used for intramural research.

c. Finally, there is an active attempt to hire researchers from the whole range of relevant disciplines. There are already several sociologists on the staff, and there is a desire to hire more. In addition, we have hired economists, political scientists, anthropologists, methodologists, and others outside the usual fields of educational and psychological research.

D. Of course NIE did not start from scratch on August 1, 1972. Most of the research programs of the Office of Education were transferred to the new agency, including the extramural grants program, the Research and Development Centers, Regional Educational Laboratories, Experimental Schools, and Career Educational Model Development. Since then several programs of the Office of the Economic Opportunity have been transferred as well, including the Voucher Experiment and Bilingual Education. Parenthetically I should say that not all

research programs in the Office of Education were transferred to NIE; OE still invests substantial amounts of money for research in three special fields: vocational education, adult education, and education of the handicapped. I will not try to describe these programs to you today, but if any of you are interested I could probably steer you to sources of information after the meeting.

E. In addition, a small NIE planning unit was established which gave the new agency a running start by commissioning a number of planning papers focused on specific educational problems or on the contributions which various disciplines might make to the study of education. One of the latter papers was one on the contribution of sociology, prepared by a committee chaired by Burton Clark of Yale.

F. Much of this first year of operation has been spent in reviewing and evaluating programs that were transferred in to the agency, digesting the planning papers that had been prepared, and recruiting a staff, which now numbers about 360. The NIE Council was not appointed and confirmed until late spring. During the coming months they will be reviewing existing programs and plans for new initiatives; the new shape on our our educational research and development program will gradually emerge

as this process proceeds. For this reason, much of what I have to say today about NIE activities must be tentative and subject to refinement and ratification.

II. NIE Mission, Organization, and Program

A. In describing current NIE programs I would like to introduce several elements of the legislation creating NIE as points of reference. That legislation "declares it to be the policy of the United States to provide every person an equal opportunity to receive an education of high quality regardless of his race, color, religion, sex, national origin, or social class". It further notes that achievement of quality education for all will require far more dependable knowledge of learning and education than now exists. NIE is established to conduct and support scientific inquiry into the educational process by doing four things:

- helping to solve or alleviate the problems of, and achieve the objectives of American education;
- advancing the practice of education, as an art, science, and profession;
- strengthening the scientific and technological foundations of education; and
- building an effective educational research and development system.

Clearly this broad mandate covers the entire spectrum of innovative activity, including basic research, applied research and development, dissemination, and evaluation.

B. It will be convenient to describe NIE's programs with reference to the organization chart that has been handed out. For those of you with a copy, the four major program units are the four boxes in the lower right hand part of of the chart. These sub-divisions are termed "offices". Let me describe them from right to left.

1. The Office of Research Grants operates the program in which many of you will be most interested since its basic philosophy is that of supporting work initiated by investigators in the field. Final decisions about the program for the coming year have not yet been made, but according to the information available the basic dimensions of the program will probably be along the following lines:

   a. The funds available will increase substantially, from $10 million in fiscal year 1973 to as much as $20 million next year. Congress has not yet passed our appropriation, but a policy has been adopted designating between 10 and 15 per cent of the total budget for this program.

b. There may or may not be three sub-programs. Last year, in addition to the regular program there was a "small grants" program for awards of $10,000 or less intended for the support of inexperienced researchers, and a "selected disciplines" designed to stimulate educationally relevant research in anthropology, political science, economics, and law. Next year the three sub-programs may be melded into one with a common procedure. In addition, a special category may be created for large grants of $250,000 or more since there is a suspicion that large proposals tended to be squeezed out last year.

c. It is expected that a prospectus system will be adopted for all aspects of the program. The expected timetable would run something like this:

. ~~Mid~~ October, 1973 - guidelines issued

. ~~Mid-November~~ - deadline for receipt of a 2-5 page prospectus

. ~~Early January~~ - select most promising prospectuses and notify proposers

. ~~Mid-February~~ - deadline for receipt of full proposals

. Mid May - make awards to successful applicants

Thus we are talking about a process which will take the better part of an academic year to complete.

d. One further aspect of the program is under consideration: NIE may single out several high priority areas for special consideration. Such areas might include studies on education of low-income families and on cost-effectiveness in the use of educational resources.

e. Sociology clearly has many important contributions to make to the study of education, and we would welcome your participation. If you are interested in the program and are not already on NIE's mailing list I suggest you write to the

OFFICE OF RESEARCH GRANTS
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
CODE 600
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20202

2. Moving to the Office of Research and Exploratory Studies, there are two programs.

   a. The Research Division encompasses much of NIE's intramural research activity. Individual investigators and small teams manage indivual projects much as you do, and in addition provide consultant services to other NIE programs from time to time. There are several sociologists in this group, including Bill Spady, Mark L. Jean Litman-Blumen, and Tom Tomlinson.

   b. The Exploratory Studies Programs is organized in task forces, each focusing on a particular educational problem. As you see from the chart these are currently identified as curriculum & instruction, technology and productivity, early learning, post-secondary education, governance and organization, educational personnel, educational finance, and bilingual education. Each group is responsible for two functions:

      1. Planning and conducting programs of directed research in its problem area, chiefly through issuing requests for proposal; and

      2. Monitoring and evaluating programs and projects in these problem areas transferred to NIE from other agencies. Most of the programs supported in the research and development centers and regional educational laboratories are assigned to the task

forces within the Exploratory Studies Unit. The centers and laboratories no longer have a special relationship to NIE, but compete for support of their programs on the same basis as other investigators and organizations.

3. The third major unit is the Office of Programmatic Research and Development. This office supports large scale development and demonstration efforts focused on particular problems.

   a. Career Education is one such program. Sociologists are among those who have been bothered by the apparent lack of fit between our educational system and our economic institutions. The Career Education Program is designed to develop educational programs which provide individuals with knowledge, capabilities and attitudes necessary to successfully interact with the economic sector. In addition to the development of major new models - the school based model, employer based model, and residential model - this program conducts and supports a limited amount of exploratory and unsolicited research relevant to this mission.

   b. The Experimental Schools Program was established on the premise that a number of useful innovations had already been developed but that their impact had been attenuated by piecemeal and fragmentary/implementation. It supports a limited number of local school districts in making a comprehensive approach to educational

change, synchronizing innovations in curriculum materials, educational organization, and teacher training.

4. Finally we come to the Office of Research and Development Resources, which is where I am located. The programs of this office are clearly the most embryonic at this point, but they are concerned with very crucial problems. The "legislative history" behind the enabling act makes it clear that NIE is not to be an ivory tower think tank (although some of its activities may resemble that image), but that it must find ways of having an impact on educational practice and results. It further designates NIE as the agency responsible for building an educational R&D system capable of having that impact. In order to do this it has seemed to us to be necessary to rethink the relationship between knowledge production and utilization and to broaden the conceptualization of the R&D system so as to include an active role for local and state educational institutions.

   a. The work of this office is divided among a Dissemination Task Force, and R&D Personnel Task Force, and a Planning and Policy Analysis Unit. At this point the work is largely in the nature of planning, feasibility studies and policy research. During the coming year limited experiments with the role of intermediaries such as teacher centers and studies of community participation may be undertaken. As the conceptualization of the educational R&D system takes more

definitive shape and data available concerning that system are inventoried we hope to identify educational indicators which will make it possible for us to monitor the operation of the system.

III. In closing, just let me say that educational research has been growing away from a narrow focus on pupil achievement of cognitive objectives to a more comprehensive concern with a broad array of intended and unintended outcomes. Further, we need to study schools as social organizations and to increase our knowledge of how educational institutions interact with other sectors of the society. These are areas in which sociologists have a great deal to contribute, and we earnestly solicit your interest and participation.